

Extension of Remarks

Representative Jan Schakowsky

National Equal Pay Day

April 17, 2012

Mr. Speaker,

I rise today, in recognition of Equal Pay Day, a day that spotlights the financial struggles that women must endure because of wage discrimination and the need to close the gender-based wage gap once and for all.

The answer is simple. Women should be paid equal wages to their male counterparts: pay discrimination is unfair, unwarranted and costly.

Equal pay is not only a fight for women, but for the families that depend on them. Women are the primary or co-breadwinners in six out of ten households; yet earn only 77 cents to every dollar paid to men. With smaller paychecks, women are forced to stretch limited dollars even further to provide healthcare, food, and shelter for themselves and their families.

According to a report by the National Partnership for Women & Families, women across the country are collectively losing tens of billions of dollars annually because of wage inequity.

Over a 40-year working career, the average woman loses \$431,000 as a result of the wage gap. This picture is even worse for African American and Hispanic women, who earn 71 cents and 62 cents respectively for every dollar men are paid.

In the 21st century, it seems unbelievable that equal pay is controversial. Yet, just last week, Wisconsin signed into law legislation to [repeal](#) provisions of the 2009 Equal Pay Enforcement Act. This Congress has the opportunity to build on the progress made by the passage of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act – legislation to strengthen pay discrimination lawsuits and the first bill ever signed into law by President Obama. The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act clarified that each paycheck resulting from a discriminatory pay decision would constitute a new violation of the employment nondiscrimination law and restart the clock for filing a claim.

The Paycheck Fairness Act, legislation currently being considered in this Congress, would go even further to fight pay discrimination and improve wages for women. The Paycheck Fairness Act, sponsored by my friend and colleague Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, would strengthen the Equal Pay Act by requiring an employer to prove that a difference in pay between a man and a woman for the same position is not sex-based. The legislation would also bring the equal pay law into line with all other civil rights law by increasing the available remedies to include punitive and compensatory damages. As a co-sponsor, I believe the Paycheck Fairness Act is essential legislation to address the lingering injustice of pay inequity.

As our economy shows signs of revival, women and their families must not be left behind. We must send a strong message that pay discrimination should not stand.